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MY LADY'S SLIPPER

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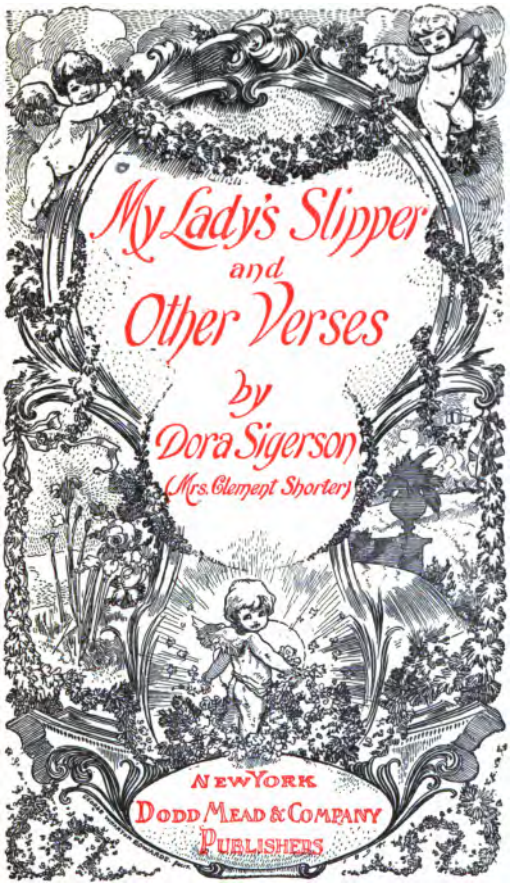

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CONTENTS

	Page
My Lady's Slipper	1
The Banshee	14
Ireland	17
The Wind on the Hills	19
The Lone of Soul	22
The White Witch	25
All Souls' Night	33
The One Forgotten	35
The Fetch	38
Near the Forum of Trajan	45
At Pompeii	48
"I have been to Hy-Brasail"	50
A Cry in the World	52
Eclipse	57
Remorse	59
Sorrow	65
A Fairy Prince	66

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THE FAIRIES 68
A ROSE WILL FADE 71
LITTLE WHITE ROSE 72
INNOCENCE 74
SPRING SONG — TO IRELAND 75
LAST EVE 77
IN SOUTHERN SEAS 80
AVE MARIA 82
THE FATE OF THE THREE SONS OF UISNEACH AND DEIRDRÉ, DAUGHTER OF FEILIM . . . 84
THE BRIDAL OF LADY AIDEEN 92
THE FLIGHT OF THE WILD GEESE 95
OUT WITH THE WORLD 98
THE LITTLE BROTHER 100
LOVE IN MY ARMS LIES SLEEPING 102
A WAYWARD ROSE 104
THE AWAKENING 106
MY ROSE 109
IN WINTRY WEATHER 111
MONICA 113
FALSE DEARBHORGIL 115
"THE ME WITHIN THEE BLIND!" 126

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MY LADY'S SLIPPER:

A TRUE STORY

I

I AM a man who hath known trouble,
O'Roork of the Lake.
On my life's glass joy rose as a bubble
To glitter and break.

She laid in mine her hands long and slender,
So softly sweet,
Little curls on her head tassell'd like tender
Gold autumn wheat.

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Brown leaves around her whirling and falling,
Blown to her cheek.
I with my heart for her loud in its calling,
Still could not speak.

Wife of my foe thus pleading before me,
There seemed no wrong.
With my mad passions that stifled and tore me,
Who could be strong?

What had she shown me there in her weeping,
On her white arm?
Black, cruel bruises vividly keeping
Tales of alarm.

What had she begged me there in the morning,
God judge me well?
What had she said that I without warning
Struggled in Hell?

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"Take me and save me, be my defender,
Hide me away."
She from my old foe bid me befriend her,
How could I stay?

Here was revenge for the old bitter wronging,
Here to my hand.
Here was the love of my life — of my longing,
Could I withstand?

Thrice did I turn to fly from my danger,
God judge me true,
Vowed that my love to her love was a stranger,
This did I do.

But when I looked on her, heard her calling,
Kneeling so low,
There the sun's sheen on golden locks falling,
How could I go?

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Dearly beloved, shaken with sorrow,
Branded with blows,
Which way does honour lie, think, for to-morrow
Only God knows.

One man should use her so, he in whose keeping
Broken she lay;
One man should love her so, see her weeping,
And turn away.

He were inhuman; riding behind me
Home did she speed,
Which way did honour lie, love did so blind me,
Great was her need.

There at my door did I linger awhile,
Tending my horse,
Saw her flit up the long steps, and her smile
Bore no remorse.

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On her pale brow was a look of soft peace,
Upward she went;
Never a glance in her welcome release
Backward she bent.

Red was her cloak, and her face like a flower
Dear to behold;
Little red slippers she wore in that hour
Buckled with gold.

Up the white steps like a flash of red flame,
In through the door;
Quick did I follow to tremble her name —
Saw her no more.

Saw her no more from that day — she had gone,
Vanished away
Like a bright light on my pathway that shone,
Then let me stray.

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II

I had a neighbour — he was my friend,
Since in the wood
Lone our two houses were, each gable end
United stood.

This was a manor once built for a knight
In days of old,
But with the centuries love and their fight
Squandered the gold.

So for my friend when inheritance came
Coffers were bare,
Just the old keep and the weight of a name,
This was his share.

Then he divided the house into two —
I took a part.
Now in my grief for his guidance I flew,
Knowing his heart.

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"At dawn he departed," the little page said. —
Time without end.
Oh, on what broken wings laggard hours fled!
He was my friend.

So the years passed me and shook from their wings
Dust and decay;
Ruin and rust on the old manor clings,
Crumbling away.

Only my desolate chambers remain,
Racked by the wind;
All down the years go I seeking in vain —
Never to find.

Gone is my love — my friend — Not a cry —
Leaving life's race,
Like the bright meteors that slip in the sky,
Leap into space.

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III.

The shadows are long, I crouch by the fire,
Bitter with years,
See all the shades of my former desire
Ghostly through tears.

Down the long hall to me, weary of play,
Comes my young hound;
At my feet, tumbled, his dusty toy lay —
What had he found?

There in the firelight glitter of gold,
God make me strong!
A little red slipper I trembling hold,
Lost for so long.

So musty and faded, mouldy with years,
Where hidden and how!
Here, after searching, much passion and tears
Come to me now.

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"What is in hiding? Oh, track me the way —
Find her, my hound!"
Up the steep stairs he goes, eager for play,
Gambolling around.

Up to the turret-room, close to the wall,
Barking he goes;
Tears till the wainscoting crumbling falls
Under his blows.

Rotten with age, here a panel unseen
Slips 'neath my hand;
Into the silence of love that has been,
I shuddering stand.

This is the secret hidden away,
Built in the wall —
Between the two houses a room cold and grey,
Gloomy and small.

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Huddled and crumbling, stretched on the ground,
Mould and decay;
Dust to dust mingled, the secret is found,
So here they lay.

In one embrace down the desolate years
Over my head
Did they lie smiling and know of my tears,
Cruel and dead.

Here the grey spider had circled them o'er,
Hand to hand tied,
In their clasped fingers lay hidden his store,
There, too, he spied.

I was the fool then who linked in that clasp
Each skeleton hand;
Thus! — will I be he who loosens the grasp;
How was it planned?

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Here is a phial; was death then so sweet,
Honour or life?
This was the only way lovers could meet —
She was a wife.

Wrapped in death's silence, safe from my scorn,
He was my friend;
It was *his* love whom I bore home that morn,
His to the end.

Was it the woman who plotted and spied,
Using my heart
Just for a stone there to step where the tide
Kept them apart?

Was he a coward, lying lowly to wait,
Giving me blame?
Vain do I strike him, avenging my fate.
Cursed be his name!

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She was my love. Did she bid him believe
I for his sake
Cast away honour to stoop and deceive
Bore *him* the stake?

He was my friend, dare I doubt him and know?
What if it be
Nothing he knew of her coming — the blow
That fell on me.

Knowing his honour, it might be she came,
Since he was still.
What did she care for my torture or shame?
I served her will.

Knowing his weakness under her eyes,
Boldly she flew
Into his arms, hushed his blame and surprise,
If this be true.

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Speak to me once, for God's sake, till I know
What was the worst!
My friend, my beloved, did you both plan the
blow —
Made me accurst?

Speak to me once, O dear voices, for I
Wait to forgive!
Tell me your secret: the echoes reply —
I alone live.

. . . . . .

Only the bark of my dog in the tower,
Glad in his play;
"Red was her cloak, and her face like a flower;"
Hide it away!

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THE BANSHEE

GOD between us and all harm,
For I to-night have seen
A banshee in the shadow pass
Along the dark boreen.

And as she went she keened and cried,
And combed her long white hair,
She stopped at Molly Reilly's door.
And sobbed till midnight there.

And is it for himself she moans,
Who is so far away?
Or is it Molly Reilly's death
She cries until the day?

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Now Molly thinks her man is gone
A sailor lad to be;
She puts a candle at her door
Each night for him to see.

But he is off to Galway town,
(And who dare tell her this?)
Enchanted by a woman's eyes,
Half maddened by her kiss.

So as we go by Molly's door
We look towards the sea,
And say, "May God bring home your lad,
Wherever he may be."

I pray it may be Molly's self
The banshee keens and cries,
For who dare breathe the tale to her,
Be it her man who dies?

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But there is sorrow on the way,
For I to-night have seen
A banshee in the shadow pass
Along the dark boreen.

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IRELAND

'TWAS the dream of a God,
And the mould of His hand,
That you shook 'neath His stroke,
That you trembled and broke
To this beautiful land.

Here He loosed from His hand
A brown tumult of wings,
Till the wind on the sea
Bore the strange melody
Of an island that sings.

He made you all fair,
You in purple and gold,
You in silver and green,
Till no eye that has seen
Without love can behold.

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I have left you behind
In the path of the past,
With the white breath of flowers,
With the best of God's hours,
I have left you at last.

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THE WIND ON THE HILLS

GO not to the hills of Erin
When the night winds are about,
Put up your bar and shutter,
And so keep the danger out.

For the good-folk whirl within it,
And they pull you by the hand,
And they push you on the shoulder,
Till you move to their command.

And lo! you have forgotten
What you have known of tears,
And you will not remember
That the world goes full of years;

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A year there is a lifetime,
And a second but a day,
And an older world will meet you
Each morn you come away.

Your wife grows old with weeping,
And your children one by one
Grow grey with nights of watching,
Before your dance is done.

And it will chance some morning
You will come home no more,
Your wife sees but a withered leaf
In the wind about the door.

And your children will inherit
The unrest of the wind,
They shall seek some face elusive,
And some land they never find.

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When the wind is loud they sighing
Go with hearts unsatisfied,
For some joy they can't remember,
For some memory denied.

And all your children's children
They cannot sleep or rest,
When the wind is out in Erin,
And the sun is in the West.

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THE LONE OF SOUL

THE world has many lovers, but the one
She loves the best is he within whose heart
She but half-reigning queen and mistress is,
Whose lonely soul forever stands apart.

Who from her face will ever turn away,
Who but half-hearing listens to her voice,
Whose heart beats to her passion, but whose soul
Within her presence never will rejoice.

What land has let the dreamer from its gates,
What face belovèd hides from him away?
A dreamer outcast from some world of dreams —
He goes forever lonely on his way.

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The wedded body and the single soul,
Beside his mate he shall most mateless stand,
Forever to dream of that unseen face —
Forever to sigh for that enchanted land.

Like a great pine upon some alpine height,
Torn by the winds and bent beneath the snow,
Half overthrown by icy avalanche,
The lone of soul throughout the world must go.

Alone among his kind he stands alone,
Torn by the passions of his own strange heart,
Stoned by continual wreckage of his dreams,
He in the crowd forever is apart.

Like the great pine that rocking no sweet nest,
Swings no young birds to sleep upon the bough,
But where the raven only comes to croak —
"There lives no man more desolate than thou!"

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So goes the lone of soul amid the world —
No love upon his breast, with singing, cheers;
But sorrow builds her home within his heart,
And nesting there will rear her brood of tears.

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THE WHITE WITCH

HEAVEN help your home to-night
MacCormac, for I know
A white witch woman is your bride,
You married for your woe.

You thought her but a simple maid,
That roamed the mountain side,
She put the witch's glance on you,
And so became your bride.

But I have watched her close and long,
And know her all too well,
I never milked before her glance
But evil luck befell.

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Last week the cow beneath my hand
Gave out no milk at all,
I turned, and saw the pale-haired girl
Lean laughing by the wall.

"A little sup," she cried, "for me;
The day is hot and dry."
"Begone," I said, "you witch's child."
She laughed a loud good-bye.

And when the butter in the churn
Will never rise, I see
Beside the door the white witch girl
Has got her eyes on me.

At dawn to-day I met her out
Upon the mountain side,
And all her slender finger-tips
Were each a crimson dyed.

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Now I had gone to seek a lamb
The darkness sent astray,
Sore for a lamb the dawning winds
And sharp-beaked birds of prey.

But when I saw the white witch maid
With blood upon her gown,
I said, "I'm poorer by a lamb;
The witch has dragged it down."

And "Why is this your hands so red
All in the early day?"
I seized her by the shoulder white,
She pulled herself away.

"It is the raddle on my hands,
The raddle all so red,
For I have marked MacCormac's sheep
And little lambs," she said.

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"And what is this upon your mouth,
And on your cheek so white?"
"Oh, it is but the berries' stain."
She trembled in her fright.

"I swear it is no berries' stain,
Nor raddle all so red."
I laid my hands about her throat,
She shook me off, and fled.

I had not gone to follow her
A step upon the way,
When came I to my own lost lamb,
That dead and bloody lay.

"Come back," I cried, "you witch's child,
Come back and answer me."
But no maid on the mountain side
Could ever my eyes see.

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I looked into the glowing east,
I looked into the south,
But did not see the slim young witch,
With the crimson on her mouth.

Now, though I looked both well and long
And saw no woman there,
Out from the bushes by my side
There crept a snow-white hare.

With knife in hand I followed it,
By ditch, by bog, by hill.
I said, "Your luck be in your feet,
For I shall do you ill."

I said, "Come, be you fox or hare,
Or be you mountain maid,
I 'll cut the witch's heart from you
For mischief you have made."

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She laid her spells upon my path,
The brambles held and tore,
The pebbles slipped beneath my feet,
The briars wounded sore.

And then she vanished from my eyes
Beside MacCormac's farm,
I ran to catch her in the house
And keep the man from harm.

She stood with him beside the fire,
And when she saw my knife,
She flung herself upon his breast,
And pray'd he 'd save her life.

"The woman is a witch," I cried,
"So cast her off from you."
"She 'll be my wife to-day," he said,
"Be careful what you do!"

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"The woman is a witch," I said.
He laughed both loud and long.
She laid her arms about his neck;
Her laugh was like a song.

"The woman is a witch," he said,
And laughed both long and loud.
She bent her head upon her hand;
Her hair was like a cloud.

I said, "See blood upon her mouth
And on each finger-tip!"
He said, "I see a pretty maid
With a rose upon her lip."

He took her slender hand in his
To kiss the stain away.
Oh, well she cast her spell on him;
What could I do but pray?

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"May heaven guard your house to-night,"
I whisper as I go,
"For you have won a witch for bride,
And married for your woe."

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ALL SOULS' NIGHT

[There is a superstition in some parts of Ireland that the dead are allowed to return to earth on the 2nd of November (All Souls' Night), and the peasantry leave food and fire for their comfort, and set a chair by the hearth for their resting before they themselves retire to bed.]

O MOTHER, mother, I swept the hearth, I
set his chair and the white board spread,
I prayed for his coming to our kind Lady when
Death's sad doors would let out the dead;
A strange wind rattled the window-pane, and
down the lane a dog howled on.
I called his name and the candle flame burnt
dim, pressed a hand the door-latch upon.
Deelish! Deelish! my woe forever that I could
not sever coward flesh from fear.
I call'd his name and the pale Ghost came; but
I was afraid to meet my dear.

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O mother, mother, in tears I checked the sad
hours past of the year that 's o'er,
Till by God's grace I might see his face and hear
the sound of his voice once more;
The chair I set from the cold and wet, he took
when he came from unknown skies
Of the land of the dead, on my bent brown head
I felt the reproach of his saddened eyes;
I closed my lids on my heart's desire, crouched
by the fire, my voice was dumb.
At my clean-swept hearth he had no mirth, and
at my table he broke no crumb.
Deelish! Deelish! my woe forever that I could
not sever coward flesh from fear.
His chair put aside when the young cock cried,
and I was afraid to meet my dear.

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THE ONE FORGOTTEN

A SPIRIT speeding down on All Souls' eve
From the wide gates of that mysterious shore
Where sleep the dead, sung softly and yet sweet.
"So gay a wind was never heard before,"
The old man said, and listened by the fire;
And "'T is the souls that pass us on their way,"
The young maids whispered, clinging side by side,
So left their glowing nuts awhile to pray.

Still the pale spirit, singing through the night,
Came to this window, looking from the dark
Into the room; then passing to the door
Where crouched the whining dog, afraid to bark,

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Tapped gently, without answer, pressed the latch,
Pushed softly open, and then tapped once more.
The maidens cried, when seeking for the ring —
"How strange a wind is blowing on the door!"

And said the old man, crouching to the fire,
"Draw close your chairs, for colder falls the night;
Push fast the door, and pull the curtains to,
For it is dreary in the moon's pale light."
And then his daughter's daughter with her hand
Passed over salt and clay to touch the ring,
Said low, "The old hath need of fire, but the young
Have that within their heart to flame and sting."

And then the spirit, moving from her place,
Touched there a shoulder, whispered in each ear,
Bent by the old man, nodding in his chair,
But no one heeded her, or seemed to hear.

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Then crew the black cock, and so weeping sore
She went alone into the night again,
And said the grey-beard, reaching for his glass,
"How sad a wind blows on the window pane."

And then from dreaming the long dreams of age
He woke, remembering, and let fall a tear.
"Alas, I have forgot — and have you gone? —
I set no chair to welcome you, my dear."
And said the maidens, laughing in their play,
'How he goes groaning, wrinkled-faced, and hoar,
He is so old, and angry with his age,
Hush! hear the banshee sobbing past the door."

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THE FETCH: A BALLAD

"WHAT makes you so late at the trysting?
What caused you so long to be?
For a weary time I have waited
From the hour you promised me."

"I would I were here by your side, love,
Full many an hour ago,
For a thing I passed on the road-way
All mournful and so slow."

"And what have you passed on the road-side
That kept you so long and late?"
"It is weary the time behind me
Since I left my father's gate.

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"As I hastened on in the gloaming
By the road to you to-night,
There I saw the corpse of a young maid
All clad in a shroud of white."

"And was she some comrade cherished,
Or was she a sister dead,
That you left thus your own true lover
Till the trysting hour had fled?"

"Oh, I would that I could discover,
But her face was turned away,
And I knew I must turn and follow
Wherever her resting lay."

"And did it go up by the town path,
Did it go down by the lake?
I know there are but the two churchyards
Where a corpse its rest may take."

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"They did not go up by the town path,
Nor stopped by the lake their feet,
They buried the corpse all silently
Where the four cross-roads do meet."

"And was it so strange a sight then,
That you should go like a child,
Thus to leave me wait all forgotten,
By a passing sight beguiled?"

"'T was my name that I heard them whisper,
Each mourner that passed by me;
And I had to follow their footsteps,
Though their faces I could not see."

"And right well I should like to know now
Who this fair young maid might be,
So you take my hand, my own true love,
And hasten along with me."

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He did not go down by the lake side,
He did not go by the town,
But carried her to the four cross-roads,
And he there did set her down.

"Now, I see no track of a foot here,
I see no mark of a spade,
And I know right well in this white road
That never a grave was made."

And he took her hand in his right hand,
And led her to town away,
And there he questioned the good old priest
Did he bury a maid that day.

And he took her hand in his right hand,
Down to the church by the lake,
And there he questioned the fair young priest
If a maiden her life did take.

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But neither had heard of a new grave
In all the parish around,
And no one could tell of a young maid
Thus put in unholy ground.

So he loosed her hand from his hand,
And turned on his heel away,
And "I know now you are false," he said,
"From the lie you told to-day."

And she said, "Alas! what evil thing
Did to-night my senses take?"
She knelt her down by the water-side
And wept as her heart would break.

And she said, "Oh, what fairy sight then
Was it thus my grief to see?
I will sleep well 'neath the still water,
Since my love has turned from me."

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And her love he went to the north land,
And far to the south went he,
And her distant voice he still could hear
Call weeping so bitterly.

And he could not rest in the daytime,
He could not sleep in the night,
So he hastened back to the old road,
With the trysting-place in sight.

What first he heard was his own love's name,
And keening both loud and long,
What first he saw was his love's dear face,
At the head of a mourning throng.

And all white she was as the dead are,
And never a move made she,
But passed him by on her lone black pall,
Still sleeping so peacefully.

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And all cold she was as the dead are,
And never a word she spake,
When they said, "Unholy is her grave
For she her life did take."

And silent she was as the dead are,
And never a cry she made,
When there came, more sad than the keening,
The ring of a digging spade.

No rest she had in the old town church,
No grave by the lake so sweet,
They buried her in unholy ground,
Where the four cross-roads do meet.

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NEAR THE FORUM OF TRAJAN

IN Rome, as I look from my lattice
And lean to the night,
Where the living sleep, still as the dead are
All in the sunlight.

The dead are awake 'mid our resting
Beneath the pale moon.
I arise and will walk with their numbers,
Dawn rises so soon.

I hear the bell voices together
Crash into strange sound —
"I, Trajan, am cold;" "I, Aurelius,
Lie stiff in the ground."

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"Grey Cassius sleeps long, and grim Brutus,
Proud Cæsar is dead";
Thus the voices of time in their singing
Roll over my head.

O spirits that throng me and whisper
In desolate street,
O souls that so follow and mock me,
You laugh and repeat:

"Who is he who shouts into the silence
More lone than us dead,
Who says he would walk with our numbers
With echoing tread?

"Who would join in a world so immortal
Yet touches no hand,
Why comes he the child of the sunlight
To our haunted land?

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"Would he know of our power and ambition,
The worth of it all?
Let him seek the gold palace of Nero,
And read on its wall.

"Let him look for our loves and desires
In the palace of Kings,
Then bid him go hence with his living
That tortures and stings.

"He is the ghost that would haunt us
With dreams of past light;
Drive him back to his kind in the sunshine,
And leave us the night."

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AT POMPEII

AT Pompeii I heard a woman laugh,
And turned to find the reason of her mirth,
Saw but the silent figure of a girl
That centuries had mummied into earth:

The running figure of a little maid
With face half hidden in her shielding arm,
Silent, yet screaming, yea, in ev'ry limb,
The cruel torture of her dread alarm.

At Pompeii I heard a maiden shriek
All down the years from out the distant past;
Blind in the awful darkness still she runs;
Death in the mould of fear her form has cast.

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A little maid once soft and sweet and white,
Full of the morning's hope, and love and joy,
That Nature, moving to the voice of Time,
Shook her dark wings to wither and destroy.

At Pompeii I saw a woman bend
Above this dead, pronounce an epitaph;
The mother of a child, it may have been.
Oh horrible! I heard a woman laugh.

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"I HAVE BEEN TO HY-BRASAIL"[1]

I HAVE been to Hy-Brasail,
And the Land of Youth have seen,
Much laughter have I heard there,
And birds amongst the green.

Many have I met there,
But no one ever old,
Yet I have left Hy-Brasail
Before my time was told.

Love have I known too,
As I shall meet no more;
Lost is the magic island,
And I cannot find the shore.

[1] One of the Enchanted Isles, sometimes seen in the western seas from the shores of Ireland.

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Since I have left Hy-Brasail
Age has encompassed me,
She plucks me by the shoulder
And will not let me be.

Her face is grey and mournful,
Her hand is hard and cold,
Yet I have left Hy-Brasail
Before my time was told.

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A CRY IN THE WORLD

KINE, kine, in the meadows, why do you low so piteously?
High is the grass to your knees and wet with the dew of the morn,
Sweet with the perfume of honey, and breath of the clover blossoms;
But the sad-eyed kine on the hillside see no joy in the day newborn.
"Man, man has bereft us and taken our young ones from us;
Thus we call in the eve, call through night to the break of day,

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That they may hear and answer; so we find no peace in the meadows.
Our hearts are sad with hunger for the love man stole away."

Bird, bird, on the tree-top, my heart doth sigh for thy music;
In the glad air of morn and promise of summer, rejoice!
Thy head droops low on thy breast, half hid in thy ruffled feathers,
The grove is lone for thy singing, O bird of the silver voice!
"Man, man has bereft me, stolen my nestlings from me,
Wrecked the soft home we built 'mid the budding blossoms of spring.

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My mate's brown wings grow red in vain beating
the bars of her prison;
With heart so full of longing and mourning, how
can I sing?"

Seal, in the cliff's shadow, why are thine eyes so
mournful?
Come from the gloom and the echo of the sea's
sighs in the cave,
Sink down into deeper waters 'mid the hidden
flowers of the ocean,
Or seek the splash and sparkle 'neath the snowy
break of the wave.
"Man, man has bereft me, robbed me of those
my loved ones;
Alone, I find no gladness; alone, where is joy for
me

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In the silvery flash of the fish or the wonderful
gardens of coral?
My eyes grow dim with watching the desolate
waste of the sea!"

Woman, king of the world is the babe you hush
with sobbing,
King of all that is living in air or sea, or on
land,
Therefore why do you kiss with lips that are
dumb with sorrow?
Your tear-drops falling cold have chilled the little
hand.
This is the soul's proud right, the earth given into
his keeping;
And all that lives thereon must come to his feet a
slave.

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Mother, why do you flee with haggard eyes in the
morning?
To answer with white face hid in the grass of a
baby's grave.

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ECLIPSE

SO for the luxury of the flesh, wrap it in fur of
fox that it be warm,
In the bear's coat sheltering its nakedness from
storm.
Give wine for its hot veins, fame for its throne,
and laughter for its lips.
All ends in one eclipse,
Sunshine or snows.
We gain a grave, and afterwards — God knows.

Bemoan beside your fire your own particular
fate, that evil wind
That blows for you no mercy; think till the
wearied mind

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Doth ease itself in tears, or reason from her high
throne slips.
So ends life in eclipse,
However the wind blows.
We gain a grave, and afterwards — God knows.

"And wherefore is all this?" you question me,
"this weighing of rich and poor,
Of many tears and laughter of which no mind
hath cure?"
Nought save 't were thinking for a winter's night,
till my mind trips
O'er thought and finds eclipse
For smiles and woes,
And I a grave, and afterwards — God knows.

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REMORSE

"WHERE have you been, my pale, pale son,
all night in the winter storm?"
(Hark! the joy-bells chime in their passionate
rhyme.)
"O mother! the bird is sheltered, the beast
housed warm —
And they, with their bodies' comfort, are thus
content;
But I, in debt for a soul, have the long night
spent
In shunning the question of God, till the spirit
within
Fought mad through the human walls of my
quivering skin

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At its kindred passion without in the howling night.

'Where is thy brother?' Oh, question not giving respite.

O mother! what do they answer, those lips, blood red,

Of nature in sport with her thousand deaths? I questionèd.

'Send me an answer.' She spoke not, the Mother of Death.

Life rocked in her restless arms, while she sucked at her breath—

('Where?' the bells cry, and I dare not reply.)"

"What would you tell me, my child, my child, that once slept a babe on my breast?"

(Do the death-bells toll for a passing soul?)

"O mother! my friend is dead, now I stand confessed.

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I can strike the stone into flame, make the dark
give light,
But I cannot give back to the tiniest bird its
flight.
I can easily shut life's gates, but God alone holds
the key;
And all the darkness of night cannot shelter me.
For my friend, you understand, my friend is
dead,
So people will pity the tears that my hot eyes
shed.
No voice to cry 'Guilty,' not seeing my brain's
red shame —
Not knowing that 'Dead,' in my heart, hath
another name.
He wondered the world should plot him such
mischief and pain;
Knew not that his world was worked from one
jealous man's brain,

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Whose hands set in motion the wheels, laid his heart on the rack,

Followed ever with murmurs of doubt on his fortunate track,

Till the world, more eager to listen to evil than good,

Caught my whispers to hurl them back on the man as he stood.

Crept scandal, with listening ears, to his keyhole, supplied

Quick rumour, with news for the keen appetites so denied;

And hungry excitement kept hard on his quick-silver feet

Till men, self-comparing, and finding comparing were sweet,

Would say, 'Look at this man,' — meaning, look what a contrast there be, —

Or, 'So has he sinned, see to him (so your gaze avoid me).'

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Foolish world, as if men were not judged, by each different mind,
By God's justice, not that of the world's great classing of kind:
'This is right, that is wrong,' as though minds were all made on one plan,
Leaving nought to inheritance, will-power, or surroundings of man.
He is dead, mother, dead; I his friend might have made his earth fair,
But I crept like a scorpion to sting all his hopes to despair:
Robbed his body of this world's joys, and his soul of the hope
Of that other that sings through the air at the pull of the rope,
Till my mad passion swells at the tongues of the bells."

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"Hush thee and listen, my son, my son, for the bells are the voice of love."

(All the things He made live, can their Father forgive.)

"O mother! a sinner's cry may be heard above.

And so, if the dead forgive, then my dying breath

Will plead that a sad soul pass through the gates of death,

Where it stood outside so weary, afraid to call,

For that pale ghost standing within in his funeral pall,

Awaiting my tears that would wash his stained record white,

And I could not weep; but, mother, I weep to-night."

(Peace, the bells sing, is God's reckoning.)

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SORROW

INTO my heart, Sorrow, you found a way;
Mine enemy, it was bitter to weep and pray;
I gave you tears for drinking,
And heart-sick sobs,
With brain too sick for thinking,
And to the throbs
Of my sad heart I hushed you till I crushed you
Into rest for all your thorns.

Into my heart, Sorrow, too oft you came;
Mine enemy, I heed not nor dread your name.
Frozen the stream of your quaffing,
And now your rest
Is broken with my laughing.
To my breast
In these mine arms I hush you till I crush you
Into rest for all your thorns.

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A FAIRY PRINCE

PRINCE CHARMING, when the wizard's wand
Had wrecked for aye my fairyland;
Had razed my castles to the earth,
And killed my child's heart with his mirth;
Then weeds grew rank where flowers had been,
And slow snakes flashed their length between.

Prince Charming, when the darkness came,
With many tears I called your name,
And "Give me back my fairyland!"
You took me by the willing hand
Ere day had lit the dawn's pale flame;
You left me when the darkness came.

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Prince Charming, spite of wizard's wand,
You said you'd find my fairyland.
I open eyes too sad for tears
Nought but an open grave appears.

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THE FAIRIES

THE fairies, the fairies, the mischief-loving fairies,
Have stolen my loved one, my darling, and my dear;
With charms and enchantments they lured and waylaid him,
So my love cannot comfort and my presence cannot cheer.

The fairies, the fairies, I 'll love no more the fairies;
I 'll never sweep the hearth for them or care the fairy thorn,

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I 'll skim no more the yellow cream nor leave the
perfumed honey;
But I 'll drive the goats for pasture to their
greenest rath each morn.

With Ave, and Ave, and many a Paternoster,
Within their magic circle I 'll tell my beads for
you;
My prayers be sharp as arrows to pierce their
soulless bosoms
Till they come with loud sorrow to tell me that
they rue.

My darling, my darling, what glamour is upon you
That you find for your gaze satisfaction and
content
In the charms of that colleen, with her black
snaky ringlets,
Her red lips contemptuous, and her gloomy
brows so bent?

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The fairies, the fairies, from her blue eyes were peeping;
They blew her hair about you, so you were lost, my dear.
With their charms and enchantments they lured and waylaid you,
So my love cannot comfort and my presence cannot cheer.

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A ROSE WILL FADE

YOU were always a dreamer, Rose, red Rose,
As you swung on your perfumed spray,
Swinging, and all the world was true,
Swaying, what did it trouble you?
A rose will fade in a day.

Why did you smile to his face, red Rose,
As he whistled across your way?
And all the world went mad for you,
All the world it knelt to woo.
A rose will bloom in a day.

I gather your petals, Rose, red Rose,
The petals he threw away.
And all the world derided you;
Ah! the world, how well it knew
A rose will fade in a day.

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LITTLE WHITE ROSE

LITTLE white rose that I loved, I loved,
Roisin bán, Roisin bán!
Fair my bud as the morning's dawn.
I kissed my beautiful flower to bloom,
My heart grew glad for its rich perfume —
Little white rose that I loved.

Little white rose that I loved grew red,
Roisin ruad, Roisin ruad!
Passionate tears I wept for you.
Love is more sweet than the world's fame, —
I dream you back in my heart the same,
Little white rose that I loved!

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Little white rose that I loved grew black,

Roisin dub, Roisin dub!

So I knew not the heart of you.

Lost in the world's alluring fire,

I cry in the night for my heart's desire,

Little white rose that I loved!

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INNOCENCE

WHITE rose must die all in the youth and beauty of the year,
Though nightingale should sing the whole night through,
Though summer breezes woo,
She will not hear.

Too delicate for the sun's kiss so hot and passionate,
Or for the rude caresses of the wind,
She drooped and pined —
They mourned too late.
Birds carol clear:
"Summer has come," they say.
"O joy of living on a summer's day!"
White rose must die, all in the youth and beauty of the year.

Digitized by Google

SPRING SONG—TO IRELAND

WEEP no more, heart of my heart, no more!
The night has passed and the dawn is here,
The cuckoo calls from the budding trees,
And tells us that Spring is near.

Sorrow no more, beloved, no more;
For see, sweet emblem of hope untold!
The tears that soft on the shamrocks fall
There turn to blossoms of gold.

Winter has gone with his blighting breath,
No more to chill thee with cold or fear,
The brook laughs loud in its liberty,
Green buds on the hedge appear.

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Weep no more, life of my heart, no more!
The birds are carolling sweet and clear;
The warmth of Summer is in the breeze,
And the Spring — the Spring is here.

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LAST EVE

LAST eve as I leaned from my lattice, looked
out at the night,
Where the gray of the sea misted into the gray
of the skies,
Came with quick beating of wings and long,
sorrowful cries,
Beautiful birds, and I wept, being blind with
their white.

How the wind's strong invisible hands beat on
doorway and pane,
And the sea seemed to writhe and roar in an
anguish of thought!

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How the moon's frightened face looking down
seemed to shun what she sought,
Hid so pale in cloud fingers to weep in a passion
of rain!

They had come in the night, and the storm, wing-
ing back to my breast
These hopes that were hopeless, these dreams
that were ever as dreams;
Rending my heart with sharp beaks and their
passionate screams,
Leashing my soul with the storm from its haven
of rest.

Night long did I put them away, did they turn
again,
Till the tumultuous waves bore them out in
their creepy recess,

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Tossed them back on the reef with a deadly
pretence of caress;
Flung up by the hand of the sea, beaten back by
the lash of the rain.

White birds, it is over and done, your last pas-
sion has paled;
The world has no place for your flight nor my
heart for your screams.
O hopes that were hopeless, sweet dreams
that were ever as dreams,
Let go! get back to your graves, you have fought
and have failed.

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IN SOUTHERN SEAS

IN southern seas we sailed, my love and I,
In southern seas.
Death joined no chorus as the waves swept by,
No storm hid in the breeze.
Low keeled our boat until her white wings dipped
half wet with spray,
And seeking gulls tossed on the passing wave
laughed on our way,
The rhyme of sound, the harmony of souls — of
silence, too;
Your silence held my thoughts, my love, as mine
of you;
The wingèd whispering wind that blew our sails
was summer sweet —
I found my long-sought paradise crouched at
thy feet.

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In northern seas I weep alone, alone,
In winter seas.
Death's hounds are on the waves, with many moans,
Death's voice comes with the breeze;
My helpless boat, rocked in the wind, obeys no steadfast hand,
Her swinging helm and lashing sheet have lost my weak command;
The shrieking sea-birds seek the sheltering shore,
The writhing waves leap upward, and their hoar,
Strong hands tear at the timbers of my shuddering craft.
I cry in vain, the Fates have seen and laughed,
Time and the world have stormed my summer sea —
I ate my fruit, the serpent held the tree.

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AVE MARIA

IN the darkness of the night I awake and weep,
Ave Maria, hear my cry!
Dread shapes crowd around me, I cannot sleep,
Ave Maria, hear my cry!

Love that must separate, Death that takes all,
(Ave Maria, hear my cry!)
Comes in the darkness with shuddering footfall,
Ave Maria, hear my cry!

Stern seems the face of the Lord and turned away,
(Ave Maria, hear my cry!)
For my prayerless night and my deedless day,
Ave Maria, hear my cry!

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Thou art meek and full of mercy, pray for me,
Ave Maria, hear my cry!
He will listen to my prayer for love of thee,
Ave Maria, hear my cry!

Say that the world's dust was in my eyes,
Ave Maria, hear my prayer!
Say that my eyes were deaf with city cries,
Ave Maria, hear my prayer!

Say that man and beast so questionèd,
(Ave Maria, hear my cry!)
That on the cross He hung beloved but dead,
Ave Maria, hear my cry!

In the darkness of the night I awake and weep,
Ave Maria, hear my cry!
All that I am not wakes my soul from sleep,
Ave Maria, hear my cry!

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THE FATE OF THE THREE SONS OF UISNEACH AND DEIRDRÉ, DAUGHTER OF FEILIM

WOE to thee, daughter of Feilim! woe to thee, Deirdré,
Slain for thy sake were the three sons of Uisneach, and red
Grew the broad plains of Ulster, on Connaught unnumbered the dead.
Woe to thee, Deirdré! — Deirdré, daughter of Feilim.
Smiled the sweet babe in the face of the Druid and his warning,
Held her young mouth for his kissing, and wept at his scorning.

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"King Connor, there's woe for thy pity, this
woman-child born,
This bud of sweet promise will wound herself red
with her thorn.
O King, in the future I prophesy evil before thee,
With the life of this child. Wilt thou listen and
heed to my story?
The breath of a babe? or Connaught and Ulster
in sorrow?
Let her be slain. Who remembers the deed on
to-morrow?"
A dozen swords spring from their scabbards and
flash fierce and bright,
The child for the fair steel stretched out her
small hands in delight.
Connor laughed: "Let her live, and if beauty
should grant her a dower,
I will wed. Toast your queen, ere I hide her
from fate in a tower."

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So the child prattled and grew fair as a wild flower uncurled,
Till the maid's reason began to wonder how narrow her world,
What the great walls of the court hid from her inquisitive view,
What perfumed the wind from the west, and where went the finch when he flew.
Many sweet tales told her nurse, that fed her romantic young brain,
Till sleeping were sweet for its dreams, and waking was dreaming again.
What if their lone tower was built on a high rock right out in the sea,
Like the rock in that fountain of hers? or perhaps it might be
The world were a garden of flowers. Comes a prince in a boat —
That dream-prince of hers — (thrice a raven, with threatening note,

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Flaps his wings) — or mayhap on an elf steed
he 'd ride.
High walls could not stay him. She leaned from
her casement and cried:
"Look, nurse, they have slain a young deer in
the court-yard below,
And the raven awaits them. My prince shall
have skin like yon snow,
As red as that blood be his lip, and his hair like
the raven's black wing."
"Hush, dearest!" the woman replied. "Hush,
dearest, and think on the King."
"Oh, nurse, were the pretty flower safe to live
on the ocean's broad breast?
Would the little wren fly for her home and her
mate to the eagle's cold nest?"
"Peace, childie! last night the wolf-hound
howled long 'neath thy window-sill there."
"Sweet nurse! dost thou know of a youth, so
pure-skinned, with raven dark hair?"

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"Peace, child! know the death-watch ticked night long at thy own bed-head,
And a cock crew thrice out of hours." "Oh, nurse! and with lips blood-red?"
"Darling, in Connor's famed court, I've heard of as fair a young knight."
"Oh, nurse! I've loved him in dreams. Wilt bring him but once to my sight?"

Woe to thee, fair child of sorrow. Love laughs at high walls in derision.
Woe to Naois and Ainlé and Ardan, who rescued thee safe from thy prison.
Into the mouth of the lion they flew from the lion pursuing,
For Scotia's king saw the bride's face — loved the beauty that was her undoing,
And many were slain for her sake, till the brave sons of Ulster have spoken:

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"Lo, King! it were sad, for one maid, that our armies were scattered and broken."

And Connor, aloud, to those chiefs, bade the three sons of Uisneach return —

Forgiven, come home to their land. But his heart was still hot with the burn

Of the shame of the maiden's desertion, and her scorn of a king and his glory;

He thought that the lips of the world must be glad on the theme of his story.

Tricked by a girl! how his pride turned the word, till Hate made it, in growing,

Fly back to the Druid and his warning. So this was the seed of his sowing.

He half thought it was writ on his brow, that the people were sick of their laughter;

He turned the stone in his sleeve: "Let them laugh; he laughs best who laughs after."

So Eogan, at word of the King, when he heard that the three youths had landed,

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Was to welcome the brothers to Erinn, outspoken
to seem and free-handed —
"But," this in a whisper aside, "slay them, each
man, without warning."
So by the sword of a traitor fell Ainlé, Ardan, and
Naois, for scorning
Of a king by the daughter of Feilim. And
Deirdré was brought to King Connor.
What heeded she of his laughter, the sneers or
the slights put upon her?
Since Naois was dead, her belovèd, the rose on
her cheek paled with sorrow,
And laughter was dead on her lips, only tears
were her own night and morrow,
Till the King a new vengeance had planned to
wake her strange listlessness to life:
To Eogan, the slayer of Naois, he gave the sad
Deirdré to wife.
And Deirdré smiled once in his face as she
mounted the steed by his side,

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That was chafing to bear her away and bring the false Eogan his bride.

Never such quarry was seen as Connor's men hunted that day,

Never such laughter was heard as they followed up valley and brae,

For Connor the King for his vengeance was spending his courser's hot breath,

But Deirdré, the daughter of Feilim, was racing her brown steed for Death.

Woe to thee, daughter of Feilim! woe to thee, Deirdré!

Slain for thy sake were the fair sons of Uisneach, and red

Grew the broad plains of Ulster, on Connaught unnumbered the dead —

Woe to thee, Deirdré, Deirdré, daughter of Feilim!

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THE BRIDAL OF LADY AIDEEN

O LADY AIDEEN, will you wed with me,
wed with me in the early morning?
A silken gown for your body's wear, a golden
crown for your hair's adorning.
(One flirting magpie on the quicken tree flies
from his perching 'twixt you and me.)
The proudest colt that my land has fed
For you shall chafe first harnessèd,
And for your bidding six maidens be.
(O bird of sorrow, 'tween hope and me!)

O Earl Desmond, I am loath to speak, loath to
speak for your true heart's sorrow,
I 'll be a bride at no man's altar, though I be a
wedded bride to-morrow.

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(Death's hand closes on the digging spade; rest
forever 'neath the yew-tree's shade.)
Six slow steeds will my body bear,
To fret or prance they will not care,
And no handmaiden with me would dwell.
(Hark! the tolling of the passing bell.)

O Lady Aideen, will you name for me, name for
me who won my refusing?
Who hath the singing and all the sun on earth for
ever and I the losing?
(Oh, the plough horses going off from me, sor-
row and tears will my harvest be.)
My arms were strong for your woman's fear;
My heart were weak for your loving, dear.
What can he give whom you will not name?
(Clings a winding-sheet by the candle's
flame.)

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O Earl Desmond, be you brave for sorrow, brave
for sorrow which is no man's shielding;
Love has wept till his eyes grew blind, and victory 's not in a weapon's yielding.
(Six black horses awaiting me, the ring of the
spade has ceased to be.)
My lord is named with a bated breath,
Whom hope calls "Life" and despair names
"Death."
And, oh, his love no world can kill!
(The banshee waits on the window-sill.)

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THE FLIGHT OF THE WILD GEESE

WRAPT in the darkness of the night,
Gathering in silence on the shore,
Wild geese flown from hiding on the hills
(Hark! the wolf-hound; thrice he howled before),
Wild geese with forest leaves tangled in their hair.
Is that blood on the heaving breasts of some,
Or dull red clay from fox-deserted lair?
Why thus so stealthy do they come?
Wild geese, women's arms round you in the darkness;
Women's hearts forbid to cry though they break;
Little children must not sob in their kissing;

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"Brother, forever? O hush thee, for God's sake!"

Wild geese with fierce eyes, deathless hope in your hearts,

Stretching your strong white wings eager for your flight.

These women's eyes will watch your swift returning.

(Thrice the banshee cried in the stormy night.)

Flinging the salt from their wings, and despair from their hearts,

They arise on the breast of the storm with a cry and are gone.

When will you come home, wild geese, with your thousand strong?

(The wolf-dog loud in the silence of night howls on.)

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Not the fierce wind can stay your return or tumultuous sea,

Nor the freedom France gives to your feet on her luxuriant shore.

No smiles for your love like the tears of your sorrowing land,

Only Death in his reaping could make you return no more.

White birds, white birds, I dream of that glad home-coming;

Though human eyes could not mark your silent flight,

Women lie face down with clenchèd hands in the sea.

(Thrice the banshee cries in the stormy night.)

Digitized by Google

OUT WITH THE WORLD

I'M out with all the world to-day,
So all the world to me is gray,
Ah me! the bonny world.
Glad birds are building in the tree,
For them I have no sympathy;
From out the grove a thrush pipes clear,
I have no wish his song to hear;
From tangled boughs that young buds share
With last year's leaves, a startled hare
A moment peeps and then away;
I have no laughter for his play,
For all the sunny sky is gray,
The weariest I am to-day
In all the weary world.

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Perchance to-morrow's hidden store
May bring my heart's content once more,
The sweet young spring comes very fair
With summer's breath and golden air;
And I may think there cannot be
A maid so blessed on land or sea.
I 'm out, though, with the world to-day,
So all the world to me is gray,
Ah me! the bonny world.

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THE LITTLE BROTHER

O BROTHER, brother, come down to the
crags by the bay,
Come down to the caves where I play;
For, oh! I saw on the rocks, asleep,
A fair mermaid, and the slow waves creep
To bear her away, away.

O brother, brother, come quick till you laugh
with me,
For no mermaid so fair is she,
But the little lass that I saw last night
(I hid in the shade, you stood in the light),
And she weeping so bitterly.

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O brother, brother, I watched her through the day,
Saw her hair grow jewelled with spray;
Once her cheek was brushed by a gull's wet wing,
And a finch flew down on her hand to sing,
And was not afraid to stay.

O brother, brother, will she soon awakened be?
I would that she laugh with me.
She sleeps, and the world so full of sound —
She 's so deaf, like the dead that are under the ground,
That I laugh and laugh to see.

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LOVE IN MY ARMS LIES SLEEPING

ROSES red for the fair young head to weave
a crown,
Let them be half blown,
For a rose in June it will fade too soon to gold
and brown.
For thee my own
The fairest blossoms in all love's land, for that
small hot hand,
And a bird to sing all the sweet day through,
Lest fear should wake in the heart of you,
And I hear my own heart's beating;
Wild roses red for the fair gold head,
Love in my arms lies sleeping.

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Lilies fair for the wind-blown hair,
It were better so
Than a blossom dead,
And a rose's thorn; but the fresh glad morn
brings breath of snow.
Hath summer fled?
Hath winter come when I dreamt it spring?
Is my sweet bird dead that he does not sing?
I hear but my heart's sad weeping.
Loose and cold is thy soft hands' hold;
Love in my arms lies sleeping.

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A WAYWARD ROSE

MISCHIEVOUS rose from the rose-tree swaying,
Can I not bind thee nor hold thee?
Can I not weave thee nor fold thee
In with thy sisters to staying?
Vain is my passion or praying,
Rose from the rose-tree swaying.

Wayward sweet rose from the rose-tree swinging,
Can I not pass thee, forget thee?
Can I not see to regret thee?
In — 'mid thy kindred's close ringing,
Out — to my heart she comes winging,
Rose from the rose-tree swinging.

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Cruel red rose from the rose-tree swaying,
  Ever to worship thee, throne thee,
  Never to lose thee or own thee,
Thy beauty to keep me from straying,
Thy thorns for my passionate praying,
Rose from the rose-tree swaying.

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THE AWAKENING

I HAD no culture for my love,
Hungrily my heart cried:
"Knowledge, be my master,
Turn, brain, O faster.
Grind the seeds of wisdom fine,
Till no mind be wise as mine,
At my wit in smiting
Men will smile delighting.
'T is not too quick for craft, or
Not too keen for laughter."
Wise for love's sweet sake to be
Surely is no vanity.

I had no fairness for my love.
Hungrily my heart cried:

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"Beauty, be my handmaid!
Leave me unafraid,
That another glass had shown
Fair a face as hath my own."
So the early morning
Found me still adorning,
Going from the glass with pride,
Coming back unsatisfied.
Vain for love's sweet sake to be
Surely is no vanity.

Lo! my love was not my love.
Stonily my heart cried:
"Take a fool for master,
Turn, brain, O faster,
While the jingling bells repeat
Much the chaff and little wheat.
Behind a pair of soul-lit eyes
You a soul would fain surprise.

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Then bring me no flowers for wearing,
Take these strange buds away,
Since I cannot now have the sweetest;
My rose that has died to-day.

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IN WINTRY WEATHER

DEAR, in wintry weather,
How close we crept together!
The storms, with all their thunder,
Could not our fond hands sunder.
No sorrow followed after,
Cold words or scornful laughter.
How close we crept together,
Through all the wintry weather!

Dear, when each rose uncurled
To its sweet narrow world,
You went to cull their glory;
You would not hear my story,

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Too sweet the birds were singing,
Too fair the buds were swinging.
If I should come or go
You did not care to know.

When each sweet rose uncurled
To its unknown world,
How could you e'er remember
That in a bleak December,
Through all the bitter weather
We crept so close together?

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MONICA

PARDON give to Monica,
She is so very fair —
Though soft eyes give promises
Rosy lips forswear.
From the shy droop of her head,
You a hope might take;
In the hiding cheek, beware,
The dainty dimples wake.
Pardon give to Monica.

Pardon give to Monica,
The havoc of her eyes,
Yours they will not shun or seek, —
There the mischief lies.

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If the flirting lashes thus
Make your day and night,
Would the loosing of your bonds
Give your heart respite?
Pardon give to Monica.

Pardon give to Monica,
She is so very fair.
What those cruel lips may say,
Roguish eyes forswear.
What knight's heart amid ye all
Were not glad to break,
That the lips with pity droop,
While eyes their laughter take?
Pardon give to Monica.

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FALSE DEARBHORGIL.[1]

WOE to the House of Breffni and to Red
O'Ruark woe,
Woe to us all in Erin for the shame that laid us
low.
And cursed be you, Dearbhorgil, who severed
north and south,
And ruin brought to Erin with the smiling of your
mouth.

. . . . . .

[1] Dearbhorgil was the daughter of the King of Meath and the wife of O'Ruark, Prince of Breffni. She was beloved of Macmurrah, King of Leinster, who is reported to have met her in secret and to have won her affections. Macmurrah carried her off, but in the subsequent war of revenge was defeated, and fled to England. His appeal to Henry II. of Anjou led to the invasion and conquest of Ireland by Strongbow and other Anglo-Norman adventurers.

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The Prince of Breffni suspects that his wife Dearbhorgil has a lover.

It is the Prince of Breffni rides quick in the pale of day,
Deep in his eyes a shadow, a frown on his forehead lay,
And spur and bit not sparing, he rests nor horse nor page,
But rides into his castle like a man who wins a wage.

And up the twisting staircase, into his lady's room,
He strides with paling forehead, like a man to meet his doom,
But from his lady's chamber he comes with sobbing breath,
With a joy upon his white lips, like a man escaped from death.

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"And shame be mine, Dearbhorgil," beneath his beard said he,
"That I should stoop to listen to a slander told to me.
And shame be mine, Macmurrah, that I should half believe
You could be false to kingship by stooping to deceive."

Her little page, enamoured of her beauty, tells the prince a lie and is sorely troubled.

But in the lady's chamber the little page did frown,
And on his cheek so crimson the bitter tears fell down.
"And false she is, and cruel, to a Knight so brave and true,
And I wot now she is distant, thus leaving him the rue.

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"I wot now she is riding far up on her palfrey white,
And the comrade beside her is not her own true knight,
A plague upon all women, from north to sunny south,
Since my lips are dumb to honour for the smiling of her mouth."

O'Ruark goes on the terrace to quiet his unrest before he seeks his lady, and while there his doubts are again awakened.

But O'Ruark went out right gladly for the lie the page had said,
How his lady still lay resting so weary on her bed,
And he went out to the terrace to cool his fevered cheek,
There he saw his kern a-watching, like one afraid to speak.

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"What see you from your tower now, O kern?"
he turned and cried.
"I see one on the near hills upon a king's horse
ride."
"What see you from your watch, kern; does
nothing else appear?"
"There hides one on the terrace, with her eyes
all full of fear."

"And who are you in hiding, who goes neath
this late moon?"
"I am your true Dearbhorgil, glad home you are
thus soon."
"No hour for wives to ramble; but wherefore
do you weep?"
"With joy for your returning — I wandered in
my sleep."

He discovers his wife upon the terrace, where she has hid to watch for her lover.

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She pretends she has walked in her sleep and is sad for a dream's sake.

"Joy's tears are summer rain, Queen, your eyes
are sad and red."
"A dream of evil-boding, and that was all my
dread."
"What was the dream distressful that made your
face so white?"
"I dreamt that storm and thunder surrounded
you to-night."

He tries to draw her into a confession, having seen the King of Leinster riding on a white charger.

"My lady, storm and thunder ride on the near
hill's side."
"Then hasten into shelter!" the lady paled and
cried.
"In from the lash of tempest I dare not turn to
go,
Lest, coming up from Leinster, it might lay
Ulster low."

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"My lord, the moon is paling, the dawn grows calm and clear,
There is no angry weather, and wherefore do you fear?"
"My lady, hush, the kern sees something on the way."
"My lord, why listen to him?—I have such news to say."

She will not understand him and tries to draw him to her and into the castle.

"Nay, I shall hearken to him. O kern, what do you see?
If there 's aught on the highroad now quickly tell to me."
"I see one by the pine-wood come on a charger white,
He seeks the shadow always, as though he fears the light."

He does not listen, and is full of anger. The Kern says he sees a stranger on the highway.

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She tries to persuade the prince it is a wild dog.

"Half blind the kern, and aged, all wizen, cold, and grey,
A wolf is on the highroad, who hurries quick away."

"A wolf, Queen, is a danger who in the shade does go,
At the thief who seeks the night-time I quick shall bend my bow."

(*She screams.*)

The prince raises his crossbow and she screams a warning.

"Why did you call, Dearbhorgil, disturbing so my aim?"

"My bodkin pierced me sorely, and that is all my blame."

"Then, cry out not so loudly lest he should turn away."

"My lord has but to bid me, and ever I obey."

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"Look, kern, again, and answer, where creeps the lone wolf now?"

She tries to outwit him again, and uses all her charms, but the prince is not to be blinded.

"I see a king's plume waving by yonder oak-tree's bough."

"It is a hawk he watches, that is hanging there so low."

"Then at that bird of evil, dark death, I 'll bend my bow."

(*She screams.*)

"Again your call, Dearbhorgil, and would you have him hear?"

She screams again and her lover knowing the warning flies.

"A bat that flew across me was all that made me fear."

"The wolf speeds down the highroad, all at your lady's cry,
The hawk has spread his dark wings, and seeks another sky."

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Now that the danger is past she soon flatters the prince into believing she loves him alone.

"Why should we heed the grey hawk? Let him
fly off to his nest,
Why should we heed the lone wolf? Let him
go in peace to rest."
"My lady, neither beast nor bird slunk round
my home to-night;
It is a high and honoured prince who rides
away in fright."

"And wherefore should you wax so pale, if beast
or king it be,
Since I have but one prince, and he stands all
so wroth with me?
There, let the blind kern find his kings in wolf,
or hawk, or dove,
But come you from the cold, my lord, into
your lady's love."

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And therefore as we do believe that which we most would fain,
She wooed suspicion from him, and had his heart again.
But the little page went sighing, "A plague may women win,
She has put the anger from him with the dimples in her chin."

Woe to the House of Breffni, and to red O'Ruark woe,
And woe to us in Erin for the shame which laid us low,
And cursed be you, Dearbhorgil, who eloped into the South,
And war made loud in Erin with the smiling of your mouth.

But the curse fell heavy on Ireland of her foul dishonour.

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"THE ME WITHIN THEE BLIND!"

I

AT the convent doors, full of alarm
She stood, like a young bird quitting its nest.
Her first flight flown right into my arm,
Her first tears wept upon my breast.
It was the young dove, wond'ring and afraid
To find the narrow circle of its home
Held not the forests in its ingle shade,
Held not the Heavens 'neath its simple dome.
Upon my heart she rested, finding so
A window to the world, and whisp'ring said,
"Your arms shall shield from evil winds that blow,
There from all sorrows I shall hide my head.

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Your eyes my outlook to this wild'ring place
That I know nothing of, and you know all."
So at my soul's dark windows pressed her face,
Saw there the world's first evil shadows fall.
She was not very learnéd, but all sweet,
All yielding — to a fault exceeding kind.
A woman-child from dainty head to feet,
Too quick to act each impulse of her mind.
A lily grown within a holy place,
In air too pure the snowy bell uncurled
Ever the lashing winds of sin to face,
Or brave alone the knowledge of the world.
I set the blossom in the World's hot glare,
No walls to shelter it, no doors to keep
Its purity; I loved the crowd to stare,
Nor thought that time would change its snowy sleep.
A lamb it was, a little weakling one,
That I, the shepherd, took without its fold

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And let — almost ere life was well begun —
The wolf get to, that tore it from my hold.

From out the walls that know not of men's love,
To meet her father's dying voice she flew,
Then turned to me — last friend the earth above —
She, loving little, thought she loved so true.
Wept long upon my breast, crept to my heart,
Became my wife, and lived in joy awhile.
And then, as time went on, she drew apart,
I saw much tears and the less frequent smile,
The doubtful look the eyes had, bent on me,
As though some great illusion she had known.
And then, alas, I did not know nor see,
But now, too late, too plain the cause is shown.

Full of a quaint belief in God and man,
In prayers and miracles, and in all good,

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The crystal fate of her pure teaching ran
Beneath my eyes, and was not understood.
I sullied the fair stream, for who was I
To meet a woman's eyes when up they steal
From gazing in the well where they descry
The dream reflection of a fair ideal?
A would-be cynic, and a man who had
No hope of Heaven, no belief in Hell,
To teach her of the world, its good and bad,
Why was it to his lot the teaching fell?
The little body, quickly satisfied,
Expressed no want I did not love to give,
I warmed it, clad it, fed it, yet denied
The larger soul within the right to live.
Her body would have loved me, been content
With my great worship, had her soul gone down
Beneath its living, but it fought and bent
The body to its will, till with a frown
Of almost hate, she grew to see me come

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To draw her to me in a fond embrace,
And kiss her lips, to all my kisses dumb.
And then I learned the anger of her face,
Spoke to her, questioned her, and got reply,
Not in these words, for she spake as a child,
Half full of anger, half inclined to cry,
Full of deep troubles, incoherent, wild.
But I have read their meaning to my heart,
Placed every thought, and speak them day by day,
Until I feel the sorrow and the smart
Will burn into my flesh when it is clay.

"I do not love you any more," she said,
"Nor this great world. O, I were better dead,
Or never born, for everything is wrong
I once thought good. I am not brave nor strong
To understand and keep my weak soul white;
It wanders from me to some dreadful night.

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Before you took me life was good and sweet,
Easy to understand and all complete;
Within four walls we trod our daily way,
A holy life and love for each new day.
Sinless bright faces, purity and prayer,
A narrow life, yet oh, to me so fair.
But in your mighty world I do not know
Among its thousand ways the road to go;
No great community doth wield the whole,
But many sects confront the seeking soul.
My wrong my neighbour's right, my joy his shame,
My tears his laughter, or my praise his blame.
Alas, if some sure haven I had found,
Or viewed the world from some near vantage ground.
But in your arms no shelter do I know
From all the blinding winds that round me blow.
Life was so fair to me, and death more sweet
With Heaven's joy, to make the crown complete.

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But you, who had no God, have shut for me
The Heavens' gates, and bid me only see
A deaf, blind dome above me, and below
The wormy grave — I shudder as I go.

"Death was so sweet a dream, a meeting-place
Where we again should find each lost, dear face.
And all God's love, alas, for me no more,
But now the grave so dark I stand before.
Cold, black, and lonely my warm body's bed,
No prize for living — and forever dead.
She too is gone, the Mary full of grace,
To me, a woman, took a mother's place,
Heard all the little griefs I dare not tell
To her dear Son. To her a mother-maid
So comforting I went, all unafraid.

"Since God is lost, then all is lost indeed.
You did not know the comfort or the need

Digitized by Google

Of God for me, who am so frail and weak.
Blown by all winds, I know not where to seek.
Too busy with your books, you did not know
I stood beside you, and I suffered so,
For each vain question silenced with a kiss,
For each lost hope you did not pause to miss.
I was a wife you had no time to woo,
I was a woman — and you never knew.
A child to you, because you could not hear
My woman's soul that called so loud and clear.
You thought that like a child I was afraid,
With all life's instinct, of the death you made
Me look to, and you kissed my tears away,
While I was weeping for the friends you say
I 'll see no more, and all the loss of those
Who never had been lost till you arose
To close God's gates and Heaven hide from me.
You gave me kisses, thinking I should be
As easy silenced as a child with sweets.

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My soul will not be silent, it repeats
All the wise reasons that you bid me write
(I went with laughter, bidding you indite
For that great book of yours that went to prove
No Godhead bid the mighty world to move)
Against the probability of God.

"With your strong brain my weaker reason trod,
Until at last it followed step with you,
Beheld no God in all the starry blue.
And at my tears you smiled, and bid me go
Buy a new ring, a ribbon, or a bow.
I was too childish in my prayers, I see,
Now that all prayer has passed away from me.
Too much belief will make another go
Into too little, and 't was even so
That I believed in God, and to my woe
Did not with reason temper my belief.
Your kindly humour, worse than biting scorn,

Digitized by Google

Smiled on my soul, till doubt at last was born.
Better harsh words to drive my soul to bay,
Continual laughter wore my faith away.

"When foolishly I first would make you come
Into the church, you knelt with heart all dumb.
You came to please me, weary of it all,
Until beside you I could hear the call
Your soul made at this mockery of prayer,
Till I too read your thoughts, and saw the glare
Of altar lights, as I had seen the flame
Of heathen worship. And the priest who came
To serve his God, no longer seemed to me,
Being God's servant, more than man to be,
Saintlier, and purer, more than others are,
Who look on God's high altar from afar.
And reading thus your soul as you sat dumb,
I prayed again you would not seek to come.

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And so you smiled, as though 't was to your mind,
Saying belief sat well on womankind,
Fed their emotions, sentiments, and so
You loved a woman to a church to go,
But as I did not mind, you would remain
To write your book till I came home again.

"These were the little things doubt fattened on,
Until at last I found my faith had gone.
That day — I do remember all so well —
My baby died, I cried to God and fell
Down on my knees, and raised my eyes to you
For comfort from the horror that I knew.
I cried to God to let me meet again
My little one, where there was no more pain,
Only great love. And ever by his feet
Each lost familiar face to see and greet.
And as I cried I turned and looked to you,

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All dumbly praying you would say, 'T is true
That sweet old story. There is no good-bye.'
But your sad pitying eyes gave me the lie,
Saying he 's dead, and there 's no more than death.
I kissed the parted lips that had no breath,
So young to go into the dark alone,
Never to rise. My heart seemed turned to stone,
And my soul dead. Lest you should see my eyes
I looked through the dim window, and surprise
Dawned on me, for the world went by the same
As though behind our narrow wall the flame
Of life had not been quenched, and in its hair
The same sad wind of death blew even there,
Making the grey where once the gold had been,
Blew in its eyes, and all that they had seen
Was half forgotten. Thus I stood and saw

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The world go by, obeying some strange law
It knew not of, yet hurried to some goal
By this same death, that had us all in thrall.
And oh, I seemed to see into each brain,
So busy with small thoughts, and all so vain,
Of petty fashions, plans for years to come —
Plans made for times when most their lips were dumb.
It seemed to me that death stood by my side
And smiled upon the crowd, well satisfied
To see them pass so gay, all fashion's slave.
And then I fell to thinking that indeed
The world was ill and cruel, since my need
Was all unwept for, that it drew not near
From out the sunshine once, to shed a tear,
But flitted by with laughter, and all gay,
Through the dim hours that tread their time away.

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"It was that night I dreamed the same sad dream,
That I upon a barren hill did seem
To watch the world go by in one great throng;
As mountain winds will blow the leaves along
By time's swift wind they ever hurried on;
And as they passed their faces paled or shone
With fear or love of God. And then I saw
That each poor, weary traveller did draw
A burden with him, and it seemed I knew
What was within the load that each one drew.
In one lay sorrow, in another pain,
In this stern duty done that bore no gain.
Here poverty was big, there bravely borne
Harsh words, then blows some weary back had torn.
So on, so on, but more with grief were bent
Than aught besides, tears did they bear content.
And when I closed my eyes awhile to rest

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From all these moving thousands, strangely blessed
With their sad loads, I looked again, and there
Beheld a figure, white, divinely fair,
Stretched on a cross, by hands that still were red
With dropping blood; and on the glorious head
A crown of thorns, while yet the eyes unclosed
Had not the glare of death's most chill repose,
But glowed yet with a love beyond man's power.

"And as I gazed the people in the shower
Of his life's blood laid down their burdens there,
Departing whole, and with their faces fair
'Through all the ages, living still,' I cried,
'O Thou belovéd God.' And over all the earth
I saw Faith move, and knew it had its birth
As soon as Time, and all beneath the sun
Drew comfort from their Gods — that were but One,

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The only God, though served in many ways.
And as I prayed, I heard to my amaze
Long laughter, hard and loud, that shook and
spread
Around, above us, over every head
Of that vast crowd, that shuddered, fell apart
Before the mockery, and in my heart
Cold horror grew. I turned to seek the cause
Of that strange humour — coming without pause,
And there, upon a little hill, beheld
A man, face hid in hands, whose laughter swelled
Above all cries. 'Wherefore,' I said, 'you dare
Disturb the people, busy with their prayer,
What do you see to move your laughter so?'
'I see,' he said, 'a multitude, that go
All full of prayer, yet laden down with grief,
With pain and tears, yet, such is their belief,
The load is light.' And so he laughed again.
'And is your mirth,' I said, 'at joy or pain?'

Digitized by Google

'I laugh to see them come and pray,' he said,
'To pray, and pray, and pray, when God is dead.'
And as he spoke the people, parting, fell
Into confusion, underneath the spell
Of his loud laughter, and beneath the Cross
Came sounds of strife; he laughed 'Behold the loss
Of Him who never was.' I looked and there,
Still nailed, a wooden God the tree did bear.
And then the crowd slow-drifting crept away,
All deeply laden; I alone did stay,
Hearing their parting cries, as on and on
Into the dust that hid them they were gone.
And then he spoke, when all had passed us by,
'They are but as the leaves that fall and fly,
Blown by the winds of time they on are borne
To separate, and from each other torn
To fade apart, to wither there and die.'

Digitized by Google

And as he laughed I gave a bitter cry,
And sprang to stop him; raising up a stone
To slay him with, I vowed he should atone
For this black horror, in a holy place.
He raised his head — O God, he had your face!"

And here she ended all the bitter tale,
And I, poor fool, no word could find to speak,
But let her go, with little face all pale,
And heavy sobbing like her heart would break.
I was so angry, finding all my care
And all my love as nothing in her sight,
I had forgotten that the larger share
Was in my heart, and never saw the light.
I was too old to act a lad's gay part,
To hang upon her words, be by her side
All the long day, yet oh, within my heart
She had no rival since she was my bride,

Digitized by Google

Save those same books, that did divorce indeed
Her love for me. Ah, would that I had torn
Them leaf from leaf, and so destroyed my creed,
Before they caused that gentle heart to mourn.
Would I had thrown myself down at her feet,
And learnéd there the simple faith she knew,
Not by a sneer the every sign to meet,
And pierce the gentle soul thus through and through.
Would I had caught her as she passed me then,
All full of tears, and flung my book away,
And vowed no more to wound her with my pen;
What grief was brought me for that brief delay!
Oh, what was fame that I should sacrifice
My love's sweet soul, to catch the world's vain ear,
More joy, indeed, to keep the heart I prize
Above all fame, beside me ever dear.
But I with sullen look let her pass by,

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And did not speak when last she turned her
head,
Nor when beside the door I heard a sigh
Breathing farewell, although my own heart bled.
"Good-bye," "Good-bye," I hear it night and
day,
Always with tears, and then the whisper low,
"I do not care now what I do or say,
There is no right, and I am glad to go."
She glad to go! — I did not heed her speech
Until, all tired of anger I had gone
Into her room, a pardon to beseech,
And found the bed had not been pressed upon,
And it so late. All through the empty room,
And through the house I searched for her in
vain,
And staggered, like a man to meet his doom,
Out in the darkness to the storm and rain.
And there I ran and called to her till dawn.

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Like some mad thing, I hunted through the night,
Until the glowing stars that on me shone
Withdrew in pity, giving me the light.
Sane with the morning, home I sought once more,
My home to me now ever desolate.
But day, alas, did not my peace restore,
And bring her back in love, who left in hate.

"Good-bye," "Good-bye," "and I am glad to go,"
O God, those words that echo down the years,
To drop upon my heart in endless woe,
With all the bitter hopelessness of tears.
Gone, gone, how did they ever pass
The lone, long months, the endless weeks and days,
The wingéd hopes that flew from me, alas,

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And left me helpless in a stunned amaze.
Gone, gone, forever gone, a ghost stole by
Within my house to dwell, and met me there,
Behind each open door to peep and fly,
And look upon me from her empty chair.
Sweet ghost it was, that had no face but hers;
One time I thought her small hand on my cheek,
Thinking she had returned all unawares,
Reached up to hold her, half afraid to speak.
Reached up and found within my eager hand,
A withered leaf blown through the open door,
And then again I seemed to see her stand,
And hear the sobbing of her voice once more.
"We are but as the leaves that fall and fly,
Blown by the wind of time they on are borne,
To fade apart, to wither there and die,
To separate, each from the other torn."
Oh, the long days, I could not stay nor go
By my lone house, but like a maddened thing

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Would dream some time she, wounded, home might stray
Like some lost dove upon a broken wing.
Like some poor bird robbed of its nestling, I
Would hasten home to find it cold and drear,
Again fly forth, because some hidden cry
Would seem her voice that called in trouble near.
Oh, the long hours of sorrow and of gloom
'Neath the slow-lifting curtain of the night,
When each black hour might be her stroke of doom,
And every second make her deadly plight.

Did I then ever sleep, or was my dream
So like to waking that there seemed to be
No slaking of my anguish! In the stream
Of drowning thoughts there was no hope for me.
"I do not care now what I do," she said.
O God, I trembled, seeking in the night,

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Did she guess at her dangers, so untried,
What did she dream of in her desperate flight?
I do believe in hell, I do believe
In all its tortures. I have known great grief
As few men know it, nor did I receive
Or for a moment gain a prayer's relief.
But through the night I wander, damned alone,
With Hell's despair high flaming in my breast,
My every hope long turned into a stone;
And yet I go, still seeking without rest.

Once crouching in the shadow of my hall
I saw a woman raise her hand to ring.
Eager with hope I hurried — heard her fall
To drunken weeping, then begin to sing.
Cold with this horror, out into the night
I ran and wandered through the streets till morn.
And once again between me and the light
I saw one pass — and hope again was born.

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Slow did I follow till my foolish heart
Leaped up and claimed her, so I took her hand,
To meet a stranger's eyes, and feel her start,
Surprised at grief she could not understand.
For one brief moment did the womanhood,
Half quenched in her, look forth with pity sweet,
As though a sorrow once she understood —
Then mocking laughter echoed through the street,
And left me broken, adding to my hell
Another torture. Could I live and know
My child was out amongst these fiends to dwell,
Her small, lost feet went straying to and fro?

All the cold river did I walk beside,
Thinking her face would sometime meet my eyes
White on some dark wave pillow, but the tide
Lay dull and silent till the grey sunrise.
Once did I see a little form all bent
Go by the water, creeping in the shade,

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As though the last small grain of hope were spent,
And all were lost, the debtor still unpaid.
She flung herself upon a bench at last,
Her thin face hidden in a shaking hand;
My soul cried to her when I would have passed,
I knelt beside her, by my grief unmanned.
I called one name, I raised her drooping head,
My hands, wet with her tears, lay on her cheek.
"Beloved," I cried; she thrust me off and fled
Before the words my heart had made me speak.
But not before her face I saw and knew,
She was not my lost love, but one so sad,
So lost to hope, that I should track her too,
Or solitude and grief would make her mad.
But when I tried to seek her, she had passed
Into the whirling world, to tread alone
Life's bitter fruit, and drain the wine at last
Whose every drop will burn her heart to stone.
O women, women, in these awful nights

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I learned the cruel burden which is yours;
Thrust from the giddy world of dear delights
Into the dark, she suffers and endures.
Tender, you are not fit for such a fight,
Or such a foe as man can be to you.
God pity those who wander in the night,
And have no star of love to guide them through!

And oh, God pity me who may not know
Where go her straying feet by night or day,
When each long mile I eagerly do go
May bear me from her yet more far away.
God pity me, who in the night awake
Do fear the cruel laughter of the town
And women's cries. The echoing feet, who make
Life's bitter struggle ere they sink, go down.

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II

To-night I found her, fate was kind to me;
For one brief hour I had her once again,
And her dear face once more was blessed to see,
Although my voice did call to her in vain.
Back to her convent home she had returned,
Walked many miles, and fell before the door,
All weary save the brain that throbbed and burned,
And restless fever through her pulses tore.
There was she found, and borne into the home
She left all full of eager hopes, and gay
With life's young innocence that loved to roam,
And fell by thieves upon the world's highway.
Robbed of all joys, and whipped by time and care,
This poor wayfarer had once more gone back
To that lost home she once remembered fair,
To seek her jewels on the homeward track.

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And so I found her. Sitting by her bed
I marvelled greatly how she ever came
So many miles, for yet her soft feet bled,
And bitter hardship marred her tender frame.
I may not ever know what she has borne
Through these long days when she was lost to me,
But oh, the bitterest grief I have to mourn
Are those most cruel trials I did not see;
Are those sad, unseen tears, whose track remained
In her sad eyes that did not rest in sleep,
Are those unknown afflictions, marked and stained
On the small hands she did not let me keep.
I heard her fevered lips call on the dead,
In loving cries that through her bosom tore,
And then repeating all the words I said
Of resurrection, fall to weeping sore.

And then she sobbed, "Death stands here by my side

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And my sad soul is all afraid to go,
Because the hope of Heaven is still denied.
What bears the darkness yet I cannot know,
I would be brave if I could overcome
The evil thoughts that follow me and cry,
All in my ears, that Heaven itself is dumb,
And death be mine forever when I die."

And so to soothe her, spoke my tortured voice
Breathing a poem that once she loved and knew,
How in death's anguish shall the soul rejoice,
And joy be hers when last she struggles through.
And "Oh," I said, "sometime I too shall see
'*Peace out of pain*,' '*a light*,' and '*then thy breast.*'
Safe in my arms, belovéd, you shall be
In long embrace, '*and with God be the rest.*'"
And hearing me with her bewildered brain,
She caught the verses with a sudden smile,

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And "*One fight more*," she quotes the verse again,
"*The last and best*." she quiet lay awhile,
And then she spoke more calmly than before:
"I was a dreamer, and I 'll dream again,
One dream, the last and best, the first and last.
Death blesses me the dream I can retain,
My first sweet dream, the evil time is past.
The dream that made the world a joyful place,
Worth being born for, strong one's load to bear,
Easy to live, easy to fight and face,
To suffer all its tortures and its care.
Death shall not conquer me, I will not die
In his cold land, but fly to some embrace
In that belovéd sphere, where my one cry
Can summon to my aid an angel's face.
I will not die." And then she turned to me,
And peace and sanity shone in her eyes,
As though at last my face she chanced to see.

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I hid it from her, seeking a disguise,
For fear she still did hate me, but she said,
As though the first days were, "And have you
come?
You were so long." Then heavy leaned her
head
Upon my shoulder, and her lips were dumb.

Thus did I lose her for a second time,
Now without hope of meeting. In my grief
I go from church to church, from clime to clime,
A lone man, haunted by his unbelief.

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